

of Terrorism Act that just passed the Senate 95 to 0. That legislation, of which I was a chief cosponsor, will make it easier for American victims of terrorism abroad to collect court-awarded compensation and to ensure that the responsible state sponsors of terrorism pay a price for their crimes. The act also contained an amendment I authored with Senator PATRICK LEAHY that will provide faster and better assistance to victims of terrorism abroad. This legislation, which has passed the House as well, will now go the desk of President Clinton, who will sign it.

While I strongly support assisting terrorist victims, I also believe that we need to do more to prevent Americans from becoming victims of terrorism in the first place. And I believe that we should act now—before terrorists strike again, killing and injuring more Americans and leaving more families grieving. I urge Congress to act pass S. 3205 before we adjourn.●

CONGRESS MUST ADDRESS INEQUITIES SUFFERED BY FEDERAL RETIREES

Mr. JOHNSON. Mr. President, I rise today to commend the Congress and the President on the recent enactment of S. 2420, the bill to provide long-term healthcare insurance for federal employees. As the nation's largest employer, we have set an example for the private sector in establishing a long-term care insurance program for federal workers and retirees. At least thirteen million people are expected to benefit from this far-sighted effort, but there is more work to be done on those issues affecting current and former Federal employees. Today, I wish to highlight three proposals on which I have received much correspondence from my constituents: repeal of the Government Pension Offset, GPO, elimination of the Social Security Windfall Elimination Provision, WEP; and, health insurance premium conversion availability.

I am a cosponsor of S. 717, Senator MIKULSKI's proposal to reform the GPO. Additionally, I am a supporter of initiatives in the House of Representatives to eliminate the WEP. Both pieces of legislation alleviate current laws that block Federal annuitants and their spouses from collecting full Social Security benefits. Because of the current budget rules requiring the offsetting of spending cuts or tax increases, passage of these reforms have been complicated.

We should not penalize people who have worked hard and contributed to the country simply because they worked for the Federal government and receive a Federal pension. This Senate must consider these bills a priority, and seriously review the offsets necessary to achieve these essential and

fair changes. I believe that we need to enforce a budget discipline which will balance the budget without borrowing payroll tax dollars from the Social Security trust fund and any other federal trust funds. However, now that the budget is balanced, we should first restore the change that helped bring us toward fiscal soundness.

Finally, I wish to address the availability of health insurance premium conversion arrangements. As my colleagues may be aware, no Senate legislation has been introduced, but H.R. 4277 has been introduced in the House. Under the provisions of this bill, the Office of Personnel Management, OPM, would be directed to take necessary measures to ensure that enrollees have the option to paying charges out of pre-tax earnings. This would ensure equal premium tax treatment for federal workers and retirees. I urge my House and Senate colleagues to provide full consideration to this legislation, and bring Federal employees and retirees pay and benefit equity and fairness.

Mr. President, these are just three issues of concern to me and my constituents. While enactment of the long-term care bill was a great step forward, I must reiterate my call for more work to be done. I am hopeful that we may make a serious effort on this legislation on the few remaining days of the 106th Congress. These concerns will not go away, and I know we will surely be hearing about the GPO, WEP, and premium conversion in the next Congress as we do not take action this year.

225TH BIRTHDAY OF THE UNITED STATES NAVY

Mr. LUGAR. Mr. President, I ask my colleagues to join me in commemorating the 225th birthday to the United States Navy, by passing Senate Resolution 373. Several of the Senate's other veterans of naval service have joined me in sponsoring this resolution and I thank Senator MCCAIN, Senator MOYNIHAN, Senator WARNER, Senator COCHRAN, Senator ROBB, Senator BOB SMITH, Senator MILLER, Senator BOB KERREY and Senator JOHN KERRY.

While we like to celebrate on a birthday, we must pause in solemn reflection, for yesterday, the Navy family suffered a tragic loss. I send my heartfelt condolences to the U.S.S. *Cole* and her extended family. Like thousands of Sailors before them, these brave men and women have made the ultimate sacrifice in service to their country. The loss is felt by the entire nation, and the entire nation grieves with you and expresses gratitude for your sacrifice.

October 13, 1775, was the day that the Continental Congress established a "Naval Committee" to acquire and fit out vessels for sea and draw up regulations. By the following month the committee procured two ships, two brigs

and later two sloops and two schooners. From these modest beginnings, the greatest Navy in the world has grown. Down through the years, the Navy has been central to the history of this nation, and ever-integral to her longevity and prosperity.

Mr. President, I had the honor of serving in the Navy. Perhaps my greatest honor during my service as a young naval intelligence officer was working for Admiral Arleigh "31-Knot" Burke, when he was Chief of Naval Operations. A heroic WWII destroyer squadron commander, Admiral Burke was truly a man of vision. Under his tutelage I learned valuable lessons about the Navy's place in our history, but also about the key role it plays today in economics, science, politics, and international relations. Then as now, the world was an uncertain place, and the Navy played a vital role in calming the waters.

Admiral Burke is the namesake for the class of destroyers to which the U.S.S. *Cole* belongs. The *Cole* tragedy brings the spotlight on the Navy and the day-in, day-out honor, courage and commitment of her sailors. At the commissioning of the lead ship in the class, Admiral Burke stated fittingly "This ship is built to fight, you had better know how." A quote reminiscent of Captain John Paul Jones legendary declaration: "I wish to have no connection with any ship that does not sail fast, for I intend to go in harm's way." These are the best ships in the world, manned by the world's best Sailors, but they are not impregnable fortresses, they do sail in harm's way.

Many have expressed incredulity at the attack on the warship *Cole*. But, she was in a vulnerable situation—coming pierside to replenish fuel in a presumed-benign environment. The task that was to occupy *Cole* and her crew over the next several months—maritime interdiction duty in the Persian Gulf—was more precarious. Ships refuel in foreign ports daily as they have for many years. But this tragedy is a reminder that the peace and prosperity we enjoy is not without cost, nor are the commitments we make to our allies.

The U.S.S. *Cole* is one of the Navy's finest warships—one of 318 operational ships. 4108 Navy aircraft are also operational today. 42 percent of those ships are away from homeport and 32 percent, like the *Cole* and the U.S.S. *George Washington* Battlegroup, of which she was a member, are deployed. These numbers provide a snapshot of the Navy's diligence around the globe. Their involvement in contingency operations over the last 10 years is also very telling. From 1946 to 1989 (44 years) the U.S. Navy responded to 195 crises, while from 1990 to 1999 (10 years) the Navy responded to 122 crises. Such optempos demand much of the men and women in uniform, and their loved ones